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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: AMBASSADOR MEETS DFM SHAKIROV, NO  
PROGRESS ON STRAIN TRANSFER

1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Ordway met with Deputy Foreign Minister Askar Shakirov on October 20 in Astana and raised the issue of the strain transfers envisioned by the November 2004 Biological Weapons Prevention Program (BWPP) Amendment. Shakirov, discouragingly, replied in the same vein as the GOK did during the Joint Requirements Implementation Plan (JRIP) talks in September. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Shakirov clung to the GOK's most recent interpretation of the BWPP amendment - strain transfers are to be contemplated only after the reference laboratory is completed. He expressed concern that Kazakhstan would have no guarantee that the lab would be built if it agreed to the transfer up front. Ambassador Ordway replied that such a concern might be understandable if this were the first such agreement between the U.S. and Kazakhstan. Given the United States' long record of fulfilling its nonproliferation commitments to Kazakhstan, the Ambassador noted, the concern is completely unfounded.

3. (SBU) The Ambassador also asked Shakirov to look at the situation from a political standpoint. Kazakhstan's delay in approving the strain transfers is highly unlikely to resolve any delays the GOK perceives in getting the reference lab completed. Shakirov said that while he could understand that reasoning, MFA is but one of many agencies involved from the GOK. Shakirov advised the Ambassador to discuss the transfers directly with the Minister of Health, Yerbolat Dossayev.

4. (SBU) Comment: Shakirov's discouraging comments most likely reflect his staff's reading of the current interagency position rather than a strongly held MFA position. The Embassy will pursue the strain transfer issue vigorously with the Ministry of Health. End Comment.

Ordway

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